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TOWARDS SELF-RELIANCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF STATISTICAL MANPOWER

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Before the 1960's African statistical services were subsidiaries of the colonial countries' statistical offices, and their main objective was to collect statistical data in specific fields and feed them back to the metropolis for processing and analysis. They thus served as executing, rather than planning and decision-making, services. Accordingly, the staff employed in them immediately following independence comprised essentially operational agents, most of them trained on the job.

2. From the beginning of the 1960s, the African countries which had recently attained independence began to give thought to ways of obtaining the numerical data required in order to launch their national economies. The first session of the Conference of African Statisticians, held in 1959, discussed the issue at length, and acknowledged that emphasis should be placed on training for operational staff.

3. The need for more detailed statistical data very rapidly made itself felt, with the result that African countries came to see statistics as a separate discipline and to recognize the need for the establishment of special institutions to train statisticians in Africa.

II. SITUATION OF STATISTICAL STAFF IN THE AFRICAN REGION FROM INDEPENDENCE UP TO 1977

4. The shortage of statistical staff and the rapid turnover of qualified statisticians in African statistical services constituted one of the main topics of discussion at the Second Conference of African Statisticians, held at Tunis from 26 June to 7 July 1961.

5. In English-speaking Africa south of the Sahara, it is only fairly recently that statistics has come to be viewed as a separate discipline. People wishing to specialize in pure statistics had to be transferred from the local universities to the London School of Economics in the United Kingdom or to similar institutions. It should also be pointed out that, at the time, African Governments saw little reason for employing statisticians as such. This attitude stemmed from the fact that the Government authorities did not yet perceive the usefulness of statistics as a fundamental tool in drawing up national development policies. The staff employed in statistical services at the beginning of the 1960s comprised for the most part operational agents and clerks, and it was difficult for the few qualified professionals to claim treatment on a par with other staff with the same level of qualifications working in other administrative sectors. The result was a constant turnover of qualified staff in the statistical services in countries where the conditions of employment did not prove sufficiently attractive.

6. In terms of training, it was only towards the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s that the need for specialized institutions to train English-speaking African statisticians made itself felt. There was a long wait from the establishment of the first African statistical institutes designed for training middle-level staff (in Ghana in 1961, in Ethiopia in 1962 and in the United Republic of Tanzania in 1965) until 1969, when the first higher-level regional institute, the Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics (ISAE) at Makerere University in Uganda, was set up. The Institute's purpose was to offer the facilities required for training professional staff in statistics and applied economics in order to meet the urgent

needs of Uganda and the other East African countries, as well as certain other English-speaking African countries, with regard to the formulation and implementation of national economic and social development plans. Subsequently, other universities in the region, such as those of Ghana, Ibadan, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Dar-es-Salaam, established statistical departments for professional training in statistics.

7. The statistical services of the French-speaking African countries also suffered from the same problems of shortage and rapid turnover of statistical staff immediately following independence. In addition, the regidity of the rules in the public service ministries and the scant interest in statistics shown by Governments gave the operational staff of the national statistical services no grounds for aspiring to any advancement whatsoever. The few professional statisticians, trained in Paris before 1960 at the Ecole Nationale de la statistique et de l'administration économique (ENSAE), were for the most part recruited, as soon as they returned from training, into sectors other than the statistical services.

8. It should, however, be noted that the French-speaking (and also the Arabic-speaking) African countries demonstrated an earlier interest in the training of professional and middle-level statisticians than did the English-speaking African countries. Two middle level training centres became operational in 1961, at Abidjan and Yaounde. At the same time, a professional training centre came into being at Rabat. Facilities for training professional staff were established a year later, in 1962, at Paris by the European Economic Community (EEC) in collaboration with the French Government, and in 1970 at Algiers. In 1967 and 1976 respectively, the Abidjan and Yaounde centres in turn instituted professional training courses. Established in 1966 to train middle-level Senegalese staff, the centre at Dakar began in 1975 to offer professional courses not only for Senegalese nationals, but also for students from the Sahelian countries. The"ingenieur des travaux statistiues" division of CESD, Paris, was transferred to Kigali in 1976.

9. The Portuguese-speaking African countries, namely Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Sao Tome and Principe, Angola and Mozambique, attained political independence only in 1975. Essentially, they are thus young countries. Unfortunately, they had not benefited from any facilities in the statistical field. Up to 1975, national statistical services were practically non-existent. There were only the delegations of the Portuguese National Statistical Institute in each country, responsible for collecting statistical data on the spot and sending them back to Lisbon for processing and analysis. After 1975, the ministries responsible for economic and social development planning felt the urgent need for certain immediate statistical data, and set up with varying degrees of haste statistical services staffed by more or less inexperienced personnel without adequate training in statistics.

10. In view of the educational system and the handicap of the language of instruction, it was difficult for the countries of this group to send their nationals for training at the statistical institutes in the English-speaking and French-speaking African countries. Up to 1977, moreover, the national authorities were barely aware of how statistics could benefit the economic and social development of their countries.

Angola was the first country in the group to open a national middle-level training centre, at Lubango in Huila province in February 1979. Unfortunately, this centre was closed a few years later because of the situation prevailing in that sub-region.

11. In short, despite the fact the training programme adopted by the Conference of African Statisticians at its second session in 1961 had largely attained its initial objectives, the staffing situation of most national statistical services in the African region was still less than satisfactory in 1977, the year in which the tenth session of the Conference of African Statisticians was held. This situation led the Conference to adopt a comprehensive programme entitled "Statistical Training Programme for Africa " (STPA) which was formally instituted by resolution 9 ECO (XVIII) of the ECA Executive Committee at its eighteenth session held at Khartoum (Republic of the Sudan) in 1978.

III. STPA AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR ATTAINING SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN STATISTICAL MANPOWER

1. Main ideas which led to the birth of STPA

12. Three main ideas led to the birth of STPA. First, it was noted that African statistical services continued to experience a gradual loss of qualified staff who drifted to other parastatal and private sectors and even to other more developed countries. In addition, the existing training facilities in the region were under-utilized due to lack of information on the courses offered, the conditions of admission and available finances. Finally, it was found that most of the training courses, particularly those offered by universities, tended to be too academic.

13. These three ideas led the Conference of African Statisticians, at its ninth session held at Lome (Togo) in 1975, to insist on the establishment of a long-term programme for the training of African statisticians and to recommend the convening of a working group to consider Africa's statistical training needs. The working group met in August 1977 and, at the conclusion of its work, proposed to the Conference of African Statisticians the institution of the STPA programme.

2. Objectives of STPA

14. The main objective of STPA is to ensure that the African region has a permanent supply of qualified statistical staff for statistics departments and other State departments as well as for the private sector. In other words, it is necessary to take into consideration each country's global need for statistical staff and to ensure that the private and the public sectors have a reasonable share of the trained personnel.

15. Transfers to other posts in the public or the private sector within the same country are not regarded as a loss to that country. An effort must nevertheless be made to provide the statistical services with sufficient numbers of specialists so that they can discharge their duties of collecting, processing and analysing the data required to draw up and implement economic and social development plans.

16. To meet this objective, STPA was originally conceived as a ten-year programme aimed at ensuring Africa's self-sufficiency by:

- increasing the number of trained statisticians'
- improving and maintaining the quality of the serving statistical staff.

17. To this end, the STPA programme made provision for support to training centres so as to :

- improve their efficiency and output;
- reorient their teaching programmes with a view to making them more practical, while at the same time maintaining a good trained level; and
- ensure that they became self-sufficient.

3. Establishment of the organizational structures of STPA

18. To facilitate the conduct of STPA, the Conference of African Statisticians assigned the role of co-ordinating and directing the programme's regional machinery to ECA. A work programme for the regional component financed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was established. The staff to provide the operational support needed for the conduct of the programme were recruited. At the outset, the staff comprised a Chief Statistical Training Adviser, a Statistical Training Adviser and administrative support staff. For financial reasons, the Chief Adviser post was subsequently abolished and replaced by a second Statistical Training Adviser post.

19. At the outset, 12 training centres were selected to participate in the STPA programme. Three additional centres were subsequently admitted, bringing the present number of training centres participating in STPA to a total of 15. The two essential criteria for selection of the centres were the international character of the services offered and the practical orientation of the instruction programmes, latently needs of national statistical services.

20. Since the centres participating in the programme were to devote a major portion of their activities to basic training, they could not alone meet the pressing and growing needs of the countries in the region in respect of refresher courses and specialized training. Efforts were therefore made to identify what are known as STPA associate centres. The identification criteria are the following:

(i) organization on a regular basis of a short refresher and/or specialized training courses for serving statisticians;

(ii) adaptation of course programmes to the problems of developing countries;

(iii) participation in these courses of a significant number of candidates from Africa;

(iv) establishment of links with the STPA centres.

21. Five centres meeting the above criteria were accepted as STPA associate centres - The Munich Centre for Advanced Training in Applied Statistics, the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex (United Kingdom), the Applied Statistics Research Institute, University of Kent, Canterbury (United Kingdom), the Institute of Social Studies (ISS), the Hague (Netherlands) and the International Statistical Programme Centre (ISPC), United States Bureau of the Census, Washington. The fourth meeting of Directors of centres participating in the STPA held at Addis Ababa from 4 to 8 November 1985, has just accepted a sixth associate centre, the Department of Statistics of the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne (United Kingdom).

4. Evaluation of the activities carried out within the framework of STPA

22. At the fourth meeting of Directors of centres participating in the Statistical Training Programme for Africa, the ECA Statistics Division conducted an internal evaluation of the activities carried out in the context of the STPA programme.

23. The first component of the evaluation dealt with the results obtained by the STPA centres from the establishment of the programme in 1978 up to 1985. It was concluded that the centres have made significant progress, but that the objective set had not been fully attained, in quantitative terms, in that it has not been possible to meet the needs in full, particularly where higher-level statisticians for English-speaking countries and middle-level staff for French-speaking countries are concerned.

24. The second evaluation component covered actions relating to (i) dissemination of information on statistical training activities, (ii) maintenance of equivalence of curricula and qualifications and review and practical reorientation of the teaching programmes, (iii) in-service and middle-level training programmes, (iv) organization of short courses and seminars by the STPA centres and associate centres, (v) training of trainers and (vi) co-ordination of the whole range of the programme's activities.

25. Where the dissemination of information on training activities is concerned, a number of regular publications have been in existence since the establishment of STPA. These are the "STPA News", the Directory of STPA centres and associate centres and the Directory of centres not participating in STPA. To enable ECA to discharge fully its role in co-ordinating the Programme's activities, it must be pointed out yet again that the STPA centres and associate centres, as well as national statistical services, should submit all information relating to their statistical training activities in a regular and timely manner, and should make known their comments and suggestions on the way in which STPA publications should be presented, their content and the type of supplementary information they would wish to see included.

26. With regard to the review and practical reorientation of instruction programmes, ECA has since 1981 drawn up four guide syllabuses within the framework of STPA:

- Separate guide syllabuses for the training of middle-level in statistical staff for the French-speaking centres and the English-speaking centres (published in May 1982);

- Guide syllabus for in-service statistical training (preliminary level, first and second stages), 1983;

- Guide syllabus for in-service statistical training for Portuguese-speaking African countries (Portuguese language), 1983;

- Separate guide syllabuses for professional statistical training for the English-speaking centres and the French-speaking centres, 1985.

27. The use of these various guide syllabuses as general frameworks for revising the different teaching programmes of the STPA centres and national statistical services should permit not only a practical reorientation, but also some degree of harmonization, of these programmes.

28. It is unfortunately too early to assess the impact of the use of these various guide syllabuses on training facilities in the African region. Indeed, the following problems with regard to the use of the guide syllabuses are still encountered in some of the STPA centres:

- lack of qualified personnel;
- non-availability of adequate financial resources;
- non-availability of suitable teaching material.

29. It should be noted that the guide syllabuses for professional statistical training have just been adopted by the fourth meeting of Directors of STPA centres. They are submitted for consideration and adoption to the Joint Conference of African Planners, Statisticians and Demographers, whose report will be submitted to the forthcoming ECA Conference of Ministers. Once the syllabuses have been adopted by these various bodies, follow-up measures will be instituted with a view to inducing the centres which specialize in training African professional statisticians to adopt the recommended syllabuses to their specific requirements.

30. In general, the use made of the various teaching programmes drawn up within the framework of STPA depends on the efforts of African statistical training centres to convince national authorities of the importance of a practical reorientation, and some degree of harmonization, of programmes for the teaching of statistics in Africa.

31. Where training of teaching staff is concerned, it should be pointed out that 18 fellowships have to date being granted under the regional component of STPA to train trainers for the centres participating in the programme. The fourth meeting of Directors of STPA centres expressed the wish that this area should receive particular emphasis in the future work programme of STPA and that allowance should be made for the different circumstances of each statistical training centre. The need was also underlined to place the accent on post-graduate training, including specialization, which could also contribute to the training of trainers.

32. The situation with regard to the institution and/or improvement of in-service training programmes or national training programmes for middle-level staff has undergone marked change over the past few years. In view of the extent of the needs, a number of countries in the region have made efforts to apply the recommendation regarding the establishment, to the extent possible, of national level training facilities for middle-level statistical personnel. It is reassuring to note that the countries which have recently opened such training facilities have drawn their inspiration essentially from the standard programmes of intermediate or on-the-job training drawn up within the framework of STPA.

33. Action has also been taken in the context of the special project for Portuguese-speaking African countries. In particular, a study has been conducted to assess the statistical training needs of the countries in this group, a consultant has been sent to Sao Tome and Principe and Guinea Bissau to assist their officials in organizing middle-level in-service training programmes, and a project description has been drawn up for the financing of an in-service statistical training programme in Mozambique.

34. The activities of the STPA centres in organizing short courses and seminars for serving statisticians field have been extremely limited, particularly because of the lack of financial resources. The STPA associate centres, on the other hand, have fully discharged the role assigned to them under the programme. In future, the STPA centres should make an effort to include the financing of some seminars in their annual budget. ECA, for its part, should support these centres in seeking external financing for the organization of courses and seminars.

35. In the context of assistance by bilateral and multilateral aid bodies, reference should be made to, inter alia, the implementation of the project "Assistance of the European Economic Community (EEC) to STPA". It should be recalled that at their meeting held in October 1979, the Directors of STPA centres put forward a recommendation that the ACP secretariat and ACP countries in the African region, were requested to:

i) "Negotiate with EEC for the establishment of a regional fund for statistical training fellowships;

ii) Accord highest priority in their negotiations to the provision of resource staff for the STPA centres and the expansion of facilities where necessary".

36. This recommendation was first considered by the Joint Conference of African Planners, Statisticians and Demographers in March 1980, and subsequently endorsed by the ECA Conference of Ministers in the form of a resolution. Thereafter, the Council of Ministers of the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP) submitted to the Commission of the European Communities, on behalf of all the African countries, a request aimed at obtaining financial support from EEC for STPA under the regional component of the European Development Fund (EDF). The Commission's initial response was to finance a joint EEC/ACP/ECA study on the statistical training needs in Africa with a view to identifying the different priority areas of assistance. Following the study, a first financial package of 1,025 units of account was released from the balance under the Lome II Convention for the project "EEC assistance to STPA". EEC would be prepared to release additional funds under the Lome Convention if the African countries requested them.

37. It should be pointed out that apart from this regional assistance project, EEC has also contributed to financing, from regional funds, the construction of premises for the STPA training centres at Kigali and Abidjan, and has financed training fellowships under its country programmes. A number of other bilateral/multilateral donors, such as the French Government, the Overseas Development Administration of the United Kingdom, the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA), the United States Agency for International Development (US/AID) and the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC) are also participating in the programme by providing statistical training fellowships, sending instructors and consultants for the various STPA centres and financing teaching equipment.

IV. CORRECTIVE MEASURES AND COMPLEMENTARY ACTION TO ENSURE SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN STATISTICAL MANPOWER

38. Since its implementation was initiated in 1978, STPA has made significant progress towards its objective of making the African region self-sufficient in qualified statistical staff. However, the seven years for which STPA has been in existence have not sufficed for full attainment of the objectives set, partly because of the evolving nature of the needs in this area. Moreover, problems remain unresolved at certain points in the system which has been established, inter alia with respect to fellowships for courses at centres, limited accommodation facilities at the centres, harmonization of levels of training, etc.

39. The fourth meeting of the Directors of STPA centres had lengthy discussions on this subject, and adopted a future work programme which takes account of the corrective measures and supplementary actions to be undertaken to ensure Africa's self-sufficiency in qualified statistical personnel. Prior to that meeting, a tripartite review of STPA financed by UNDP and executed by ECA was organized at Addis Ababa in October 1985. During the tripartite review, certain areas of activity were singled out for priority in the continuation of the STPA programme, and these were taken into account by the meeting of the Directors of STPA centres in drawing up the programme of work which is submitted for the approval of the present Joint Conference.

40. The problem of non-availability of fellowships in sufficient number at the country level for courses at the statistical training centres was discussed at length at the fourth STPA Directors' meeting. In this respect, those in charge of national statistical services need to make the national authorities more aware of the usefulness of statistics by generating the data needed for economic and social planning in a regular and timely manner. Other activities design to promote awareness should also be conducted at the same time so that the national authorities can reserve a sufficient number of fellowships for statistical training, financed from national resources, indicative planning figures or country programmes agreed upon with donor organizations.

41. Furthermore, in order to meet the need for training of middle-level statisticians which is apparent in a good number of African countries, emphasis has been placed in the future work programme on increased assistance to countries wishing to establish and/or strengthen national training facilities for this category of the staff. Likewise, the African countries which are organizing or planning to organize in-service training programmes for junior staff should also receive particular attention. It has been recognized that assistance to countries in this field should not lose sight of the concern to harmonize teaching programmes on the basis of the general framework afforded by the guide syllabuses for middle-level and in-service training drawn up under STPA, so that staff trained can acquire a more or less comparable level of qualifications.

42. Generally speaking, periodic review of the guide syllabuses drawn up for the training centres and the national statistical services engaged in training activities in the African region is strongly desirable, in order to permit regular updating of the syllabuses.

43. Because they are so far behind in instituting an effective training system for their statistical personnel, the Portuguese-speaking African countries should receive particular attention within the project for special assistance to them, particularly as regards middle-level personnel. In this respect, apart from the organization and/or strengthening of in-service training programmes for each of the countries in the group, emphasis should be placed on establishing:

(a) A joint unit to train middle-level staff for Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Sao Tome and Principe and perhaps Equatorial Guinea;

(b) National units for training middle-level staff in Mozambique and Angola.

44. Where the training of professional statisticians for this group of countries is concerned, the proposal of the fourth meeting of Directors of STPA centres in which centres such as ENSEA at Abidjan, IAMSEA at Kigali and ISSEA at Yaounde were requested to study the possibility of admitting nationals from the countries of the group should be actively followed up, drawing on the experience in this respect of the College of Statistics at Dakar.

45. The development of post-graduate training and specialized training occupies a priority place in the future work programme of STPA. In this connection it should be noted that, apart from IFORD and RIPS, which offer specialization courses in demography, few of the STPA centres provide courses for specialization in a specific area of applied statistics. Such specialization courses are, as of now, given by centres outside the African region. The STPA centres therefore need to give consideration to introducing into their teaching programmes specialized courses in fields such as national accounts, agricultural statistics, sample surveys and electronic data processing. In addition, efforts should be directed towards the transfer, within five years at the most, of the "division ingénieur statisticien économiste" of the European Centre for Advanced Training in Statistics and Economics for Developing Countries (CESD), Paris, to the Abidjan and Yaounde centres in addition to the existing facilities for training at this level at the Rabat and Algiers centres.

46. The expansion of the training centres' activities will be accompanied by a parallel expansion of the activities for the training of trainers in conformity with the future work programme of STPA, allowance being made for the circumstances of each centre without losing sight of the aspirations and interests of the individuals undergoing such training. At the same time, improvements in the conditions of recruitment and employment of the instructors would be required in order to give them greater interest in their work.

47. Moreover, the recruitment of short-term consultants to give certain specialized courses at the STPA centres should increasingly be effected on the basis of technical co-operation among developing countries.

48. Finally, the periodic dissemination of information on training activities will continue to constitute one of the primary co-ordinating functions of the ECA Statistics Division. The success of this operation will depend on the regularity and quality of the information provided by the STPA centres and associate centres as well as by the national statistical services.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

49. It may be concluded that, although a shortage of statistical personnel was apparent in national statistical services immediately following independence in the African countries, efforts were made to enable those services to function to the best of their ability and collect the minimum statistical data needed in order to draw up the first economic and social development plans. The establishment of the Statistical Training Programme for Africa (STPA) made it possible to co-ordinate these efforts more effectively in order to make the African region self-reliant in the development of the statistical manpower it needs.

50. After the seven years for which the programme has been in operation, the internal evaluation of STPA has shown that the objective set has not been fully attained, although significant progress has been achieved. Co-ordination of training activities is now effective at the level of the centres and associate centres participating in STPA. Guide syllabuses for statistical training have been drawn up to provide a general framework for the reorientation of the centres' teaching programmes. Use of these guide syllabuses will make it possible to give the teaching a much more practical content.

51. Nevertheless, problems still remain. The work programme adopted by the fourth meeting of Directors of STPA centres seeks to provide solutions to these problems. The inadequacy of the number of fellowships for study at the centres, their limited accommodation facilities and the difficulties faced by certain African countries in securing admission of candidates to them are among the questions to which urgent attention needs to be devoted.

52. The implementation of the future work programme of STPA calls for the active participation of all interested parties, African Governments, STPA centres and associate centres, national statistical training centres and units, bilateral and multilateral bodies as well as ECA and other interested national and multilateral institutions. A draft resolution on statistical trainee fellowships was adopted by the fourth meeting of Directors of the STPA centres. It appears in annex II to the report of the meeting.

53. The present session of the Joint Conference of African Planners, Statisticians and Demographers is invited:

(a) To approve, following consideration, the content of the report of the fourth meeting of Directors of centres participating in the Statistical Training Programme for Africa (STPA), held at Addis Ababa from 4 to 8 November 1985;

(b) To adopt, following consideration, the guide syllabuses for professional statistical training and to take follow-up measures to ensure that existing statistical training centres in Africa use these syllabuses as a reference framework for the revision of their teaching programmes; and

(c) To adopt, following consideration, the draft resolution proposed by the fourth meeting of Directors of STPA centres to the ECA Conference of Ministers.